

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LIMA 01585 281843Z POSS DUPE
ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 /068 W
-----010722 076687 /21

R 281755Z FEB 77
FM AMEMBASSY LIMA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3848
INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY QUITO
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

C O N F I D E N T I A L LIMA 1585

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, MILI, UR, EC, PE
SUBJECT: SOVIET ARMS SALES AND INFLUENCE IN PERU

REF: MOSCOW 2381

1. WE AGREE WITH EMBASSY MOSCOW THAT THE SOVIET MILITARY SUPPLY RELATIONSHIP WITH PERU HAS NOT GREATLY INCREASED MOSCOW'S INFLUENCE. AT LEAST NOT YET. DESPITE THE CONTINUING DELIVERY OF SOVIET TANKS TO PERU, THE GOP HAS TURNED BACK TO THE POLITICAL CENTER OVER THE PAST YEAR. THE KEY FACTOR IN THIS PERUVIAN CHANGE WAS PERU'S ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES, BROUGHT ON BY THE WORLD ECONOMIC SLUMP AND THE GOP'S OWN ERRORS, TOGETHER WITH A REACTION WITHIN PERUVIAN MILITARY TO SEVEN-PLUS YEARS OF MOVEMENT TO THE LEFT. SOVIET MILITARY SALES TO PERU WERE AN INSIGNIFICANT FACTOR IN THE RECENT GOP CHANGE IN COURSE.

2. HOWEVER, THE GOP DID LEARN, AT THE TIME OF THE REMOVAL PF PERU'S FORMER LEFTIST PRIME MINISTER JORGE FERNANDEZ
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PAGE 02 LIMA 01585 281843Z POSS DUPE

MALDONADO IN JULY, 1976, THAT A NUMBER OF MIDDLE-GRADE OFFICERS HAD ABSORBED ENOUGH FAR-LEFTIST IDEOLOGY TO PLAN AND CARRY OUT SOME RESISTANCE TO FERNANDEZ MALDONADO'S REMOVAL. WE BETIEVE THIS WAS A SOBERING DISCOVERY FOR THE GOP MILITARY AND POLITICAL LEADERSHIP, WHICH PROBABLY ASCRIBED SOME INFLUENCE TO THE SOVIETS FLOWING FROM ARMS SALES AND TRAINING OF PERUVAIN OFFICERS. (IN A KIND OF REVERSE OR DEFENSIVE

RECOGNITION OF THIS, FONMIN DE LA PUENTE NOW MAINTAINS, PUBLICLY IN JUSTIFYING THE PURCHASE OF SOVIET COMBAT AIRCRAFT, THAT WEAPONS HAVE NO IDEOLOGY.)

3. WE BELIEVE THE SOVIETS ARE PLAYING FOR LONGER-TERM POLITICAL INFLUENCE HERE THROUGH THEIR ARMS SALES. THEY PROBABLY HOPE TO INDOCTRINATE DURING TRAINING COURSES PERUVIAN JUNIOR AND FIELD-GRADE OFFICERS WHO MAY RISE TO POSITIONS OF DIRECT OR INDIRECT POLITICAL POWER HERE. IN ADDITION, EXTENSIVE MILITARY PURCHASES CAN BE EXPECTED TO GENERATE GREATER DEPENDENCIES AS TIME GOES ALONG.

4. WE ALSO ASSUME WITH EMBASSY MOSCOW THAT THE GOP WOULD REACT NEGATIVELY TO ANY LARGE ARMS ACQUISITIONS BY ECUADOR, INCLUDING FROM THE SOVIET UNION. PERUVIANS ARE NOW BEGINNING TO SPEAK OF AN "ARMS BALANCE" BETWEEN PERU AND ITS NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN NEIGHBORS. THE IMPLICATION IS THAT PERU (WITH ITS NEEDS SATISFIED) IS ABOUT READY TO PURSUE SOME KIND OF FREEZE OR OTHER STABILIZING NEGOTIATIONS. (OF COURSE WE DOUBT THAT PERU'S NEIGHBORS PERCEIVE AN EMERGING "BALANCE"--QUITE THE CONTRARY.) WE DO NOT KNOW HOW FAR PERU MAY BE WILLING TO PURSUE ARMS STABILIZATION MEASURES IN THE REGION, BUT LARGE ARMS ACQUISITIONS BY ECUADOR OR CHILE CAN BE EXPECTED TO REDUCE OR INHIBIT PERU'S INTEREST IN SUCH MEASURES.

5. THE AMBASSADOR TOUCHED ON THE QUESTION OF SOVIET ARMS SALES TO PERU IN HIS OVERVIEW OF PERU, 1977 (LIMA 0727) WHICH WE ARE REPEATING TO EMBASSY MOSCOW.

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PAGE 03 LIMA 01585 281843Z POSS DUPE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PFOR
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 28-Feb-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977LIMA01585
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: RR
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: n/a
Format: TEL
From: LIMA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t1977021/aaaaaaah.tel
Line Count: 97
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Message ID: d1341fbf-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 MOSCOW 2381
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 27-Dec-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3227454
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SOVIET ARMS SALES AND INFLUENCE IN PERU
TAGS: MILI, UR, EC, PE
To: SECSTATE WASHDC MOSCOW MULTIPLE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/d1341fbf-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009